

## The Seventy-fifth Anniversary of the Telephone

*It was on the 10th of March in 1876, seventy-five years ago, that understandable speech was first sent over a wire. Perhaps the words spoken were not so profoundly important as Mr. Bell might have wished for such an historic occasion, but they were important at the moment. He had spilled some acid and needed Watson's help. More significantly, the words ushered in a new era in communication, an era that as Bell envisioned would see the growth of a vast network of wires connecting people together in their own communities, and connecting the communities to each other. The short span of seventy-five years immediately behind us has seen his great vision more than fulfilled. Progress has been achieved step by step and, although many of the steps were small, their cumulative effect over the past seventy-five years is tremendous. Today, hundreds of millions of people take for granted the ability to converse with almost any one, anywhere.*

*The two following papers, one by W. H. Martin, and one by A. H. Inglis and W. L. Tuffnell, clearly illustrate this accumulation of technological progress. They deal with the telephone itself, the instrument that Mr. Bell invented. In other fields of telephone development—switching, repeaters, signaling, and now video transmission—the same story emerges. It is a story of steady application of new ideas, improved materials, and improved techniques of measurement and design, applied to making communication faster, easier, and better. And the end is not yet in sight.*



*A "still" from the sound picture "Mr. Bell" made for the Alexander Graham Bell centennial in 1947. Shortly before the scene depicted above, Mr. Bell had spoken the historic words: "Mr. Watson, come here; I want you." At the time of the photograph Mr. Watson has just rushed in excitedly crying out: "Mr. Bell, I heard every word you said, distinctly."*